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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9595
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
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SECDEF WASHDC
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000299

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER, CAMP), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 33

Ref: A) Colombo 294 B) Colombo 287 C) Colombo 282 D) Colombo
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1. (U) Summary: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reports basic medical supplies are still urgently needed in the safe zone; this plea is repeated by health administrators in the safe zone. The UN accuses the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of forcibly recruiting a local staff member and family trapped in the conflict area. The Government advised the UN to direct their local staff in the conflict area to encourage civilians to try to escape in the coming days. USAID staff received permission to conduct monitoring of sites for internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in Vavuniya and Mannar during the week of March 16-20. Ambassador has requested a meeting with the Foreign Minister to press the GSL to allow in medicine and stop shelling. End Summary.

"Undue Deaths" in Safe Zone

2. (SBU) On March 16, two medical administrators in the conflict area reported "undue deaths due to non-availability of essential drugs at Mullaitivu" in a letter to the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition. The medical workers report that at least 500 civilian deaths since January 2009 have been registered at hospitals, and that additional "thousands of civilian deaths could have gone unrecorded as they were not brought to the hospitals." The letter informs the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition, "We have been supplied with no antibiotics, no anesthetics, and not a single bottle of IV fluid, leaving us in a desperate situation of not being able to provide even lifesaving emergency surgery." The contact laments the fact that despite recent promises by the Government to

send in basic medical supplies on ICRC ferries, none have yet arrived.

¶3. (SBU) ICRC Deputy Head of Delegation Anthony Dalziel confirmed on March 17 that no medical supplies have been sent to the safe zone in recent weeks. An ICRC ferry leaves for the safe zone tonight (March 17) and presents another opportunity for the Government to fulfill its promise to provide basic medical supplies. Dalziel noted that medical supplies were already low in the safe zone when he was there for three weeks in February, and emergency procedures were performed with low levels of anesthesia. He reports that now, "the cupboards are bare" and amputations and other emergency procedures must be performed without any anesthesia. The ICRC also welcomes U.S. support in raising with GSL counterparts the delay in issuing visas to international staff needed for the organization to properly respond to the crisis in the North; Embassy will raise with the Foreign Minister and recommends that Assistant Secretary Boucher raise with Basil Rajapaksa in their March 18 meeting in Washington.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador has raised the urgent need for medical supplies in multiple meetings with Special Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa, including at the February 18 launch of the UN Common Humanitarian Action Plan in Colombo, when Rajapaksa publicly committed to providing medical supplies in the safe zone. Only one shipment was sent, which reportedly ran out within two days. In a

March 12 meeting with Ambassador, Rajapaksa again promised that the Government would provide weekly shipments of medical supplies (Ref B); none has since been sent. The Ministry of Defense has repeatedly blocked medical shipments due to their concern such supplies would be used by LTTE to treat their wounded.

UN Worker Forcibly Recruited by LTTE

¶5. (SBU) On March 16, the UN accused the LTTE of forcibly recruiting a local staff member and three of his family members, including a 16-year old girl. The UN Office of the Resident Coordinator expressed grave concern for the safety of the four individuals, who were reportedly forcibly recruited over the weekend of March 14-15.

GSL to Civilians: "Flee the Conflict Zone"

¶6. (SBU) On March 13, the Acting UN Chief Security Officer sent a routine notice to the Government Joint Operations Headquarters (JOH) identifying the GPS coordinates of UN local staff still in the safe zone. On March 15 the JOH responded in writing requesting the UN urge the LTTE to release civilians. The reply further states; "it could be anticipated that these stranded civilians will make all efforts to force themselves out from the clutches of the LTTE very soon in the coming days. In this scenario the UN should act on these same lines and persuade the civilians to flee the Conflict Zone without delaying any further." (Note: The Government's new instruction raises concern that in the instance of further civilian deaths, blame may be levied against the civilians themselves.) The UN agreed with Ambassador that it should respond in writing to point out that the UN repeatedly has called on the LTTE to let civilians leave. Until the LTTE agrees, civilians risk being shot if they attempt to do so.

Increase in IDP Numbers

¶7. (SBU) Military Spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanyakkara was quoted in the press on March 17 as saying "over 43,000" civilians had reached Government-controlled territory. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that just 37,018 individuals (12,078 families) have fled into Government-controlled territory from January 1-March 16, not inclusive of those ICRC-assisted medical evacuees who are still in hospitals. (Comment: Another reason for the discrepancy between Government and UN figures may be due to the lack of international monitoring at certain locations; no international organizations are present in a Kilinochchi screening location. End comment.) Post advises using "nearly 40,000 IDPs" as our current estimate of arrivals into Government-controlled territory since January 1.

USAID Mission to IDP Sites

18. (U) After weeks of back-and-forth between the US Embassy, the Ministry of Resettlement and the Ministry of Defense, the Government has provided permission for US personnel to visit sites housing

recent IDPs from the north. USAID Food for Peace officer and OFDA Regional Advisor are visiting IDP sites in Mannar and Vavuniya from March 16-20; Embassy will report septel.

Reported Civilian Casualties

19. (SBU) Tamil sources from within the LTTE-controlled area report 64 civilians were killed and 106 injured on March 16. Tamil sources report that 139 civilians fled into Government-controlled territory on March 16. (Note: Such reports from Tamil sources cannot be confirmed and are frequently exaggerated.)

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